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HISTORY

AND

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

POCUMTUCK VALLEY MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION.

1890—1898.



VOL. III.

DEERFIELD, MASS., U. S. A.

PUBLISHED BY THE ASSOCIATION.

1901.

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REPORT.

Vol. III. of our History and Proceedings is now laid before you. It covers a period of nine years—1890–1898. Compelled by circumstances, this volume contains about forty pages more than either Vols. I. or II. It has been edited by the Chairman of the Committee of Publication, and he is responsible for all its shortcomings. The edition is limited to 300 copies.

Respectfully submitted,

George Sheldon

DEERFIELD, February, 1901.

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GEN. JAMES S. WHITNEY.

BY SAMUEL O. LAMB, ESQ.

James S. Whitney was, for many years, one of the most active, enterprising, energetic and successful business men, and one of the most prominent, influential and highly respected citizens of Franklin county. He was also called, from time to time, to high positions in his party, and in the State and National governments, which widely extended knowledge of his name and reputation through his own State and the country. It is therefore eminently proper that there should be some memorial of him in the proceedings of this Association in which he ever felt a warm interest, and of which he was a life member.

I do not propose, on this occasion, to attempt to give a full and complete history of the life and services of Gen. Whitney. The time allotted to me in the exercises of this evening will permit only a brief sketch and a few reminiscences of his active, varied, interesting and honorable private and public career.

My acquaintance with Gen. Whitney began in 1844, when I was a student in the law office of the late Hon. Whiting Griswold in Greenfield. It became more intimate after I assumed, in 1845, the editorial charge of the Democratic county paper, of which he was a generous supporter, and soon grew into a friendship whose ties remained unbroken till the day of his death. Our respective views of duty led us on different lines in the presidential election of 1860, but that temporary divergence of opinion on a political question never interfered with our friendly personal relations. We met for the last time on this side of the grave only a few days before his sudden departure, and the impression of his hearty grasp, his cordial greeting and kind words is still clear and bright on the page of memory.

James S. Whitney was born in that part of Deerfield then called "Bloody Brook," now South Deerfield, May 19, 1811. He was a son of Stephen Whitney, Esq., formerly of Nelson, N. H., a prominent merchant at Bloody Brook, and a man highly respected and esteemed in the community in which he lived. He was the representative from Deerfield in the General Court in the years 1834 and 1835. In 1834, he was Monitor of the first division of the House and a member of the Committee on Accounts. He was

Four years after the landing Governor Bradford speaks of the school as about to supersede the family teaching. And from this time forward education became a charge of the government, first the local as we find it in the town records, then general, as it appears in the early statutes.

The year 1636 found 3,000 or 4,000 emigrants from the mild southern counties of old England dwelling in sixteen towns and hamlets on the sandy shores of Massachusetts Bay. The year has double interest to us because it was that in which the western extending line reached the Connecticut valley and because it opens the volume of the legislative enactment. These people had endured untold hardships, had known as yet nothing but scarcity, reaching at times almost to famine, and while the most religious people under heaven they had only been able to provide for worship in the town of Boston by a house built with mud walls and a roof thatched with straw.* Yet these people grasped the educational problem on the highest side. Not beginning with the primary instruction their poverty would permit, they, in their General Court, on the 28th day of the eighth month, agreed to give "£400 towards a school or college, £200 to be paid the next year, £200 when the work is finished." The 2d of the ninth month the college is ordered to be at Newton, that part of which soon, because of the college, became Cambridge. Harvard College had come into being, and out of the little means of the struggling towns it was grandly supported. Dr. Dwight has said, "It is a question whether a more honorable specimen of public spirit can be found in the history of mankind." The towns throughout the colony gave according to — rather, far beyond — their means, and persons aided it with a wonderful munificence. To give to Harvard became then the ruling impulse of the Massachusetts will-maker and has remained the Bostonian ideal of public bequest. The dollar of their giving was not the dollar of our day. It was equivalent to several now, and the grant of the colony to the college, equal to fifty cents on each person was a serious tax. The generosity of John Harvard placed the capstone on the monument to the lofty impulse of these people holding an uncertain lodgment on the edge of a continent amid dangers fully realized and with no abundance of means, but determined to face greater privation, if need be, to keep alive inducements to the common culture. There was no concession to easy scholarship in the rules with which the

* Education in Massachusetts. Address by George B. Emerson, February 16, 1869.

As we ploughed through these great drifts up and down, there was no sound but that of the sand sifting through our wheels, and the sad murmur of the pines. At the foot of a tall black cross, planted in the yellow expanse of the plateau—an oasis in the desert—knelt a group of pilgrims on their way to the mountain chapel of Calvary.

As we struck into the primeval forest Jean Baptiste began to chatter with the volubility of a Frenchman. “*Voici la propriété du pauvre Ignace !*” “This is the estate of poor Ignace!” he cried. “This road the captive made with his own hands.” When we came in sight of the house, his excitement was intense. “*Marche, donc vite !*” “Go on quick!” he shouted to his horse, and to me, “*Voilà la vieille maison, la maison d' Ignace ! oh, que je l' aime !*” “There is the old house, Ignace's house! oh, how I love it!” And it was “*voilà*” this, and “*voilà*” that, and finally “*Voilà le babá !*” as the little toddling thing met us at the kitchen door—and here we were, under the very roof-tree of the two captives. I shall not attempt to describe my feelings. I was dazed and overwhelmed with memories of the far-off past. Mr. Raizenne's pretty wife and old mother received us without embarrassment, and urged us to prolong our visit. We drank to the memory of the captives, and to the health and prosperity of their descendants, in wine made from vines originally planted by Ignace. We tasted water from his well; we ate apples from the sole survivor of his orchard. The climax of the afternoon's enjoyment for Jean Baptiste was reached when he presented to us his only son, a chubby boy of nine, named Riscing Raizenne. After taking a photograph of the place, and leaving little Guilhelmine in tears at our departure, we drove back to the village.

The peace and quiet of the convent were grateful after the exciting emotions of the afternoon. We begged Mother des Anges not to condemn us to another solitary meal, and, after some hesitation, she kindly allowed us to take our tea with the nuns. Loyalty to our hostess forbids me to dwell on the spiritual and material delights of that repast.

In New England, the sunset hour is usually marked by an outburst of noise from the youth of the village—not so at Oka. The whole place shows the sobering, orderly influence of the little Christian community in its midst. We sat on the doorsteps of the convent, talking low with the Sisters. The soft air was redolent with the odors of heliotrope and mignonette from the garden below

buoyant youths of his own age, and a few books. He had never seen a picture or sculpture of any kind when the suggestions from the head of a blind man to whom he read Swedenborg filled him with dim longings and dreams. It was a long road from this first effort, with a piece of sheet for a canvas and paints from a house painter, to his final fame. An enumeration of his works will tell his story: The equestrian statue of Washington in Union Square, New York city; statue of Gen. Greene in the capitol in Washington; Abraham Lincoln in New York; Abraham Lincoln in Brooklyn; equestrian statue of Gen. Scott in Washington; statue of Gen. Greene, Washington; statue of Gen. Carney, New Jersey; statue of Gen. Stockton, New Jersey; statue of De Witt Clinton, capitol, Washington. These national and state commissions were many of them given during the late war, or soon after. But before this heroic period Mr. Brown held a foremost place as an artist of peculiarly vigorous American quality, matured by long study in Italy and association in our own country with the scholars, philosophers and statesmen of his period. But above all other considerations in art Mr. Brown insisted on fidelity to our own type of character, our own time and country, and he did great service in an art commission formed in Washington to promote those ideas.

People in Deerfield need not to be reminded of the fame of their townsman, George Fuller, the memorial of whose life by Howells adds peculiar interest to the many honorable records in the annals of this association. He was the son of a farmer environed with these romantic levels in our Deerfield meadows called The Bars. He had the eye and temperament to see in the successive seasons of morning and evening mists figures so transmuted, softened, blended and harmonized by this local enchantment of haze, forever after it became a part of his beauty and fidelity of expression. This was his art in its utmost truth of perception and ideal sensitiveness. He knew all schools, romanticism, realism, impressionism, and whatever new whim creates a "school," and doubtless tried many of them, but always to turn back to Nature's own secret which she revealed to him in his youth in his own environment, on the sacred meadows his feet trod, his heart loved, and his eye knew, with a much finer nerve than can be characterized by a name. But we must add the hearthstone as a factor in his education. It is still to be seen in the old dining-room at The Bars. It was a witty family that gathered around the blaze of that hearth. They were readers and loved music, and George Fuller,

Time will not permit me to tell you of the growth of the new town, its struggle for existence during the second French and Indian War, and its part in the war for independence.

At its incorporation Greenfield had only 192 inhabitants, and included what is now Gill. In 1763 the population had increased to 368, and at the commencement of the Revolution there were probably about 500 people within her bounds.

Greenfield, like other New England towns, considered it to be her first duty to settle a minister, and promptly made choice of Rev. Edward Billings. Meetings were for a season held at his house,—Old Fort Stocking,—and in 1754 the town “voted that the committee for passing men’s bills agree with Joseph Severance for drumming the year past on the Sabbath.” The committee allowed him £4 10s., and probably thought this too expensive, for they made an arrangement with James Corss to pay him £2 “for his house to meet in on the Sabbath, and other necessary meetings, he giving the signal to meet.” His house stood where the Hovey mansion now is, and his signal was a blast upon a conch shell. In December, 1759, the town “voted to build a meetinghouse this year, 45 feet long and 35 feet wide, upon the spot where the General Court hath prefixt it, and to shingle, rough board and glaze it, and lay the under floor, and make the doors.” In 1760, another vote was passed to build, the size having increased to 40 by 50 feet. The house was erected and closed in between 1760 and 1764, but it had no pews or slips until 1773.

The seating of the meetinghouse in those days was a problem that required the utmost tact and careful management. The jealousies and heart-burnings among neighbors because of the seat they occupied in the synagogue was something to be dreaded. December 4, 1775, the town “voted to seat the meetinghouse by age and estate, each man to model his estate as he sees fit in his own family. The first three in the list shall have their first choice in the pews; they that choose the Great Pew, or either of the north corner pews, shall have the next on the list put in with them, and so till we get through the house.” “Voted that one year’s age shall be equal to three pounds in estate.” “Voted that those people that do not come to choose their seat at the time appointed, the committee shall seat them.” “Voted that males be seated from sixteen years and upwards, and females from fourteen years and upwards.”

The kindly preacher, staunch and true, and steadfast as the rock,
Whose certain faith no wavering doubt had any power to shock;
The gentle, sweet and gifted soul who bore the Martha's part
By constant toil for those she loved, with all her tender heart,
Who was so great in mind and soul that she could only see
Greatness in all things but herself, in meek humility.
Full many a sturdy yeoman, too, and many a gentle dame,
Have to this old society bequeathed a worthy fame,
Who live in all our memories and merit all our praise,
But cast a shade of sadness on these anniversary days.
Then let us count our treasures flown, our loss is but their gain,
And prize with loving tenderness the dear ones who remain,
Trusting that each, as time goes on, as we grow old and gray,
Will prize with growing joy and pride the great P. V. M. A.

SOME PHASES OF OUR NEW ENGLAND INSTITUTIONS.

BY FRANKLIN G. FESSENDEN.

To-day as we enjoy ownership of lands in our towns, and carry on our self-government of such great importance, rarely do we think of the difficulties encountered by our ancestors in securing these blessings. We say without fear of contradiction, that we own our lands absolutely and in fee. We come together in town meetings, and, without question as to our right, pass votes concerning the welfare and property of each other. It is well for us who inherit the privileges, to call to mind how our forefathers obtained them.

What is the story of our titles to lands? How did this right of local self-government come into existence?

First, as to titles of lands.

It should be borne in mind, that our ancestors looked to the unwritten law of England—the common law—for their guidance. A well-settled rule of law was, that the title to all land was held from the crown.

“The King is the universal lord and original proprietor of all the lands in his kingdom, and no man doth or can possess any part of it, but what has, mediately or immediately, been derived from him. . . .”

As in England, all the land is held from the crown, so, in the colonies, the title of land was from the crown, either by actual or constructive grant.

monument stands which was erected to the memory of our fallen heroes, who fell in the late rebellion.

2. That it shall be kept in a situation where it will be accessible to all who take an interest in the many trials and sufferings of the founders of Pocumtuck, alias Deerfield.

3. This bill of sale shall be recorded on the book of records of Deerfield, and the bill kept with the deeds to the town of Deerfield.

4. Whenever a vacancy occurs in this board of trustees, either by resignation or death, the same shall be filled by the remaining trustees, within thirty days after the vacancy occurs; and the name of said trustee, so chosen, shall be reported to the town clerk, to be entered on the town books.

At the same meeting of Deerfield citizens already referred to, held February 6, 1868, to take measures for welcoming back to Deerfield the Old Indian House door, the following committee of arrangements was chosen for the purpose, to wit: Rev. Dr. Crawford, Rev. G. H. Hosmer, George Sheldon, J. H. Stebbins, Mrs. C. W. Hoyt and Mrs. William Sheldon.

Under their direction and management a festival was held at the town hall, on the evening of Friday, February 28, 1868, the eve of the anniversary of the sacking of the town, which was a success both socially and financially. The hall was filled with people. The entertainment, both in a material and literary point of view, was rich and abundant. A full account of the event can be found in the Greenfield Gazette and Courier of March 2, 1868, of which the following is a condensed statement:

Behind the speaker's stand was the venerable old door, exhibiting its honorable scars before the people, as did the Roman heroes of old, with its rude iron knocker and stout iron latch and hinges. It looked as though with proper care it could outlive generation upon generations yet to come. Over it was appropriately draped the American flag, and here, too, was the old horse-shoe found over the door when the house was taken down, put there as a preventive against witchcraft. In a small room was a collection of relics, and a lady and gentleman dressed in full Indian costumes, which had been actually worn by the savages. The fatal bullet which killed Mrs. Sheldon at the attack on the Indian house, was exhibited, and also the three original deeds, which were given when the town of Deerfield was purchased. After refreshments had been served, Dr. Crawford made a few remarks, welcoming back the old door to Deerfield, where it would ever henceforth be kept. He then read the bill of sale from Dr. Slade to the board of trustees who were to take charge of the door, and the conditions on which it was purchased. He told why the door went away, and how by its absence, the people found out how much they prized it, and again he welcomed it back, and the people assembled on the occasion. He then introduced the Rev. J. F. Moors of Greenfield, who delivered the historical address. Mr. J. D. Canning of Gill, the peasant Bard, read a poem.

Dr. Slade, the late owner of the door, was then called upon, and commenced his remarks by an amusing parody on the "House that Jack Built," applying it to the old door. He had felt that the door had belonged to Deerfield, but if he had not carried it away, there would have been no occasion for the happy event of that evening. He told how he had treasured the old relic—the link uniting the present with the past

SANGUINARIA.

BY FRANCES S. ALLEN.

The tender grass of April is pricking through the brown,
On all the windy meadows that gird the gray old town,
Where, long ago, the fathers wrought stoutly in the field
With the plowshare and the pruning-hook, but kept the spear and shield.

Then, Death lay in the thicket and waited on the crown
Of hills to which they looked — to see the wily foe sweep down,
But where the savage whirlwind passed, to-day, a little maid
Goes wandering down the deep-ridged path, singing and unafraid.

And all the spreading field which the silent brook creeps round,
Deep shrinking in its alders, she fills with happy sound,
For, pushing from its folding leaf, the bloodroot lifts its head,
In starry companies it crowds the turf beneath her tread.

It lights the budding coppice, it troops beside the brook,
From grassy mound and hollow, she meets its upward look.
Low bending, now, to gather one, she pauses in dismay;
Within her hand it seems to bleed its fragile life away.

And while she holds it, pitying, there comes a piercing cry —
Some bird from out the marshes — but she draws a troubled sigh,
And her quickened thought goes searching, till it flashes to her mind
How the stumbling class in Virgil read a marvel of this kind —

She listening dreamily to how the cornel thicket bled,
And so the good Æneas knew where Priam's son lay dead,
"For I am Polydorus," the voice came from the ground,
"Far from the land that bore me, slain by a treacherous wound" —

"O that was all a story and very long ago,
I wonder, 'O I wonder why *my* flower is bleeding so!"
And swiftly comes the answer : from out its mossy bed,
She draws, to meet the light once more — an Indian arrowhead.

O, white 'and brave and hardy the flower within whose veins
The vigorous blood springs upward when the winds awake the plains!
The moss may veil the headstone on the ancient burial-hill —
The bloodroot tells its story to children's children still.

The children of John and Phillip remembered their Connecticut relations ; they thought of the land of their mothers, as the Israelites in the wilderness thought of the leeks and onions of Egypt and went where they could see them grow ; hence another John Russell, born in Wethersfield in 1731, came back to the rich valleys of the Connecticut and the Deerfield in 1756, and in 1758 married Hannah Sheldon, great-aunt of the historian of this region.

Hence all their descendants are as much Sheldon as Russell, and proud of a stock which goes back to the beginnings of Deerfield. This John Russell's short and busy life is a matter of record in his account books now in the Memorial Hall and in Sheldon's History. He died leaving his young widow and five children just at the opening of the War of Independence. Hannah Sheldon reared her children successfully. Her son John, a thoughtful, religious youth all his life, respected as a citizen and beloved as a peacemaker, had a singular opportunity to learn a valuable trade at home.

The storm of war about Boston drove Isaac Parker, a skillful gold and silversmith, who was also an engraver, to the distant safety of Deerfield to pursue his trade and secure his stock. He taught John Russell to work in precious metals and John went to Northampton to settle in his trade.

There in 1794 he married Electa, daughter of Nathaniel Edwards and Ruth Strong, and came back to the new and thriving town of Greenfield. This part of Hampshire County was rapidly growing. Cheapside was the head of navigation on the Deerfield River ; all heavy goods like iron, salt, molasses, sugar, rum and imported goods generally, came up the Connecticut in flat bottom boats which took back cargoes of shingles, stoves, hops, brooms, pine lumber and some farm produce. The region was already petitioned to be set off as a new county, with Greenfield as the shire town.

About the time that John Russell moved to Greenfield, there came many enterprising men ; among them were Col. William Moore, Beriah and Reuel Willard, Jerome Ripley, Jonathan Leavitt, Richard E. Newcomb, Thomas Chapman, Samuel Pierce, Ambrose Ames and other notable citizens ; and a society was forming which made Greenfield a good place for business and a pleasant place of residence.

John Russell here began a successful life ; in addition to the us-

instrumental in the erection of the first, and possibly not of the second; but our record in that direction can certainly be established from the date of the field meeting here in 1872. The marble column erected by a venerable citizen of Hinsdale, in memory of a tragic event in the old French War, was the direct result of words heard from the platform on that day, and an officer of our Association was consulted as to its erection, its site, its character and inscription. Another result of that meeting was the rediscovery, so to speak, and the restoration of the inscription on Belden's Rock, now happily preserved forever. It is also certain that the study of the "History of Northfield" and its publication grew out of that same meeting. So much we may modestly claim for our two-year-old in the new line of labor to which it had been called. I will not dwell upon our subsequent career which he who runs may read. How far the erection of the monuments we now meet to dedicate may be due to the influence of that meeting or that history, none can say but that public-spirited woman who has made this day's work possible, a woman to whom the citizens of Northfield and our Association will always owe a debt of gratitude. Long may she live to enjoy the work of her hands. Should her pious and patriotic example have its proper effect, and the ratio of increase continue, Northfield, before the next quarter-centennial meeting, will earn the name of the "Monumental town." After to-day it will, perhaps, have no rival in this field except Lexington and Concord.

Your children and your children's children will read the brief inscriptions cut upon the stones you now erect and they cannot fail to be incited thereby to a study of your local history — and local history is the true foundation of all history. The local events revealed in the recent explorations of buried Greece, Egypt and Babylon are to-day the center of historical interest throughout the whole civilized world. Men watch to see whether the newly discovered records confirm the ancient written accounts, or whether they compel their rewriting. When your descendants read that "on this plain Capt. Richard Beers and his men were surprised by the Indians, Sept. 4, 1675," they see the whole story of that bloody event epitomized. They get glimpses of the march, the ambush, the consternation, the slaughter, and the barbarous work of the red devils after the victory. To them it will be a slide which they will naturally seek to enlarge by the historical stereopticon.

duced the most strenuous endeavor to embrace every opportunity looking to the advancement of the lot of their children beyond that enjoyed by themselves ; and this has been true in all the succeeding generations. The signers of this immortal document were "mother-taught," by the light of the stars perhaps, or when the day's cares were ended, by the evening firelight at the ingle-side.

On August 4, 1718, five small ships anchored at the foot of State Street, Boston, then a city containing perhaps twelve thousand inhabitants, having on board one hundred and twenty families of Scotch-Irish people, or as has been estimated seven hundred and fifty persons, though I am prepared to believe that to be an under estimate. This company mainly settled in Londonderry, N. H., and the adjacent towns of Antrim, Chester and Windham, becoming the largest and most important Scotch-Irish settlement in New England, and with them the people of this town were intimately associated during all the subsequent years, others of them settling for a time at least in Worcester.

They had emigrated largely from Colrain, Ballymoney and the adjacent towns of the Bann water valley, and were descendants of the Covenanters ; though others came from Antrim and descended from those who came there at the first colonization of Ulster in 1610.

Of the names on this memorial, five have especial local interest. There may perhaps have been others, but these five are recognized as having been later settlers here and many of their descendants still reside here. The names are John Anderson, James Wilson, John Clark, James Stewart and Wm. Caldwell.

In the autumn following their arrival some fifty families moved up to Worcester with a view to settling there. The third attempt to effect a permanent settlement there was at this time about five years old, and the Indians who in the two previous attempts had proved a serious hindrance were again becoming troublesome, so that the brave and stalwart emigrants who had "kept the pass" in Ulster, were made welcome, though not long after they are referred to even by a formal act of the General Court of Massachusetts as "poor Irish people," and subsequent deeds of intolerance toward them have left a deep stain upon the boasted charity of this venerable Commonwealth. It was Puritan versus Covenanter, a case of religious intolerance exercised against a people religiously their equal in all essential respects, though presumably lacking in social status and worldly possessions.

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